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TIME TO LOOK FOR HOLY SMOKE AT VATICAN

All 133 Catholic cardinals to vote for a new pope arrived in Rome a day before the process to elect the next head of the 1.4 billion Catholics begins on Wednesday. Hailing from 70 countries across five continents, the group summoned following the death of Pope Francis on April 21 is the largest and the most international ever. The Vatican announced that it would cut phone signals within the tiny city-state for the duration of the conclave for security reasons.

● India gets strategic partner amid conflict with Pak ● Up to 99% of exports to be exempt from tariffs ● Indian professionals to get better access to UK job market

India, UK seal free trade pact, script strategic partnership

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA and the UK finalised a long-anticipated free trade agreement (FTA) on Tuesday amid New Delhi's efforts to strengthen global partnerships in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack and the recent tariff tensions triggered by US President Donald Trump, which pushed both nations to accelerate trade negotiations. Sealed after three years of stop-start talks, the deal targets a $34 billion trade boost by 2040 through easier market access and fewer trade barriers. After speaking on phone with his British counterpart Keir Starmer, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the pact is 'ambitious and mutually beneficial'.

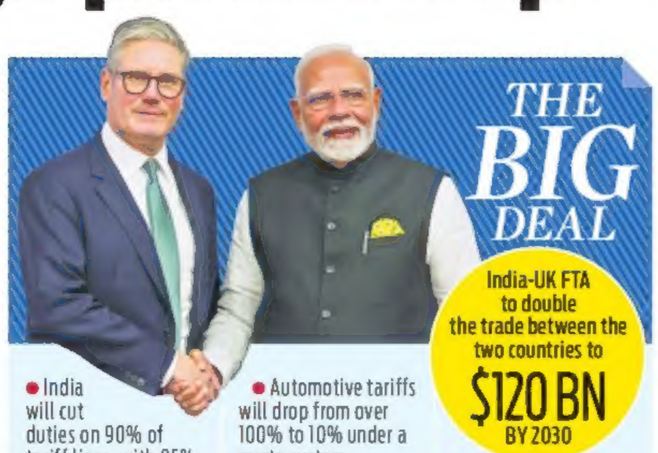
"Along with a Double Contribution Convention, these landmark agreements will deepen our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, and catalyse trade, investment, growth, job creation, and innovation in both our economies," Modi wrote on X.

Under the Double Contribution Convention, Indian workers temporarily in the UK and their employers will be exempt from paying UK social security contributions for three years—a move that could yield significant financial savings for Indian service providers, boost their competitiveness in the UK, and create new job opportunities for Indians working there.

The deal cuts tariffs on goods such as advanced manufacturing components and food products, while setting mutual quotas for auto imports. It opens Indian markets to more British firms and allows Indian professionals to work in the UK without altering its points-based immigration system. An Indian government release said 99% of Indian exports will benefit from zero-duty access. The deal unlocks major export potential for India's labour-intensive sectors—textiles, leather, marine products, footwear, sports goods, toys, and gems & jewellery—and key industries such as engineering goods, auto parts, engines, and organic chemicals.

UK's Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds met with his Indian counterpart Piyush Goyal in London last Tuesday, where they resolved most of the remaining issues.

Britain, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has not always supported India on security matters. The FTA with India marks a significant step forward, setting the tone for India's upcoming FTAs with the US and the European Union. P13



THE BIG DEAL

India-UK FTA to double the trade between the two countries to **$120 BN** BY 2030

- India will cut duties on 90% of tariff lines, with 85% becoming duty-free in 10 years
- Scotch whisky, gin, cars, aerospace parts, and food items from the UK will be cheaper in India
- Whisky and gin tariffs will be halved from 150% to 75%, and finally to 40% by year 10 of the deal
- Automotive tariffs will drop from over 100% to 10% under a quota system
- ₹4,000 cr Competitiveness boost to India companies in UK through social security exemption
- India will gain from tariff elimination on 99% of the tariff lines covering almost 100% of the trade value
- Indian professionals in the UK will be exempt from social security payments for up to three years, reducing employment costs
- Dairy products, apples, cheese excluded from duty concession to protect Indian farmers

TARIFFS AND THE POWER OF ZERO

AGRI AND PROCESSED FOODS

SECTOR	*DUTY RANGE	UNDER FTA
Animal products	Up to 20%	**99.3%** Tariff lines at zero duty
Vegetable/Oil products	Up to 20%	**99.8%** Tariff lines at zero duty
Processed food	Up to 70%	**99.7%** Tariff lines at zero duty

INDUSTRIAL GOODS UNDER FTA — FROM 18% MAX TO 0

SECTOR	*DUTY RANGE	SECTOR	*DUTY RANGE	SECTOR	*DUTY RANGE
Minerals	Up to 8%	Headgear/ Glass/Ceramic	Up to 12%	Transport /Auto	Up to 18%
Chemicals	Up to 8%	Gems & jewellery	Up to 4%	Instruments /Clocks	Up to 6%
Plastic/ Rubber	Up to 6%	Base metals	Up to 10%	Arms/ Ammunition	Up to 2%
Leather	Up to 16%	Mechanical machinery	Up to 8%	Furniture/ Sports goods	Up to 4%
Wood/Paper	Up to 10%	Electrical machinery	Up to 14%		
Textile	Up to 12%				

*(*Existing duty range)*

UNSC poses tough questions to Pak on Pahalgam massacre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

AMID rising tensions between India and Pakistan, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) held a closed-door meeting at Pakistan's request, which ended without concrete resolutions. However, members raised questions for Islamabad about the Pahalgam terror attack, expressing concerns over the targeting of tourists based on their religion.

Greece's Permanent Representative to the UN and current Security Council President, Evangelos Sekeris, described the meeting as "productive and helpful", though he acknowledged that no "specific outcomes" were achieved. "The Security Council is always helpful in such efforts to de-escalate. It is the responsibility of the Council," he said.

During the meeting held in a consultations room rather than the main UNSC chamber, Pakistan was questioned about the involvement of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) in the Pahalgam attack, with some members rejecting the "false flag" narrative, sources said. Pakistan currently is a non-permanent member of the UNSC.

"Pakistan was questioned about the cross-border linkages, the terror groups active on its soil and the way many of them have been operating with impunity. Despite trying hard Pakistan couldn't muster enough support to come out with a statement," well-placed sources said.

TERROR in KASHMIR

Sources said that another point of discussion was Pakistan's "missile tests and nuclear rhetoric," which several members deemed "escalatory". While Pakistan presented the missile tests as routine drills, they raised international alarm about the growing instability in the region.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific Khaled Mohamed Khiari, who briefed the Council, later told reporters that all members expressed the desire for de-escalation.

PM axed J&K trip after intel alert, says Kharge

MUKESH RANJAN AND RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR @ Ranchi/New Delhi

CONGRESS president **Mallikarjun Kharge** on Tuesday charged that an intelligence report was sent to Prime Miniter Narendra Modi three days ahead of the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, following which he cancelled his Kashmir visit.

"If the prime minister could change his plans, why were tourists left exposed?" Kharge wondered. He was addressing a 'Samvidhan Bachao Rally' in Ranchi.

The BJP in its pushback called it an irresponsible statement, adding Kharge could not have made a more reckless comment at a time of rising tensions with Pakistan. "What kind of comments is he making? On the one hand, he says at the (all-party) meeting that they are standing with the country, on the other, he is trying to weaken the country," former Union law minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said.

Terming the Pahalgam attack an intelligence failure, Kharge said that the government had accepted the fact and assured to address it.

Home minister: Will go beyond policing to heal Coastal Karnataka's fractured society

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

RETALIATORY killings in Coastal Karnataka have become a cause for concern for the government and law enforcing agencies. The murder of Hindutva activist Suhas Shetty a few days ago is the fourth such incident in the region in the past few years. Acknowledging the limitations of conventional policing in preventing such incidents, Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara said, "This isn't just about law and order anymore. It is about healing a fractured society."

The government plans to set up a coastal task force and involve influential community and religious leaders, in its efforts to restore peace. "We will go beyond policing," he said, emphasising the need for sustained dialogues and reconciliatory efforts. "We will not involve rabble-rousers, but use respected voices, who can help ease tensions," he added.

Investigations revealed that each killing appeared to be meticulously premeditated, raising urgent concerns over deepening communal divide and bloodshed in the region. Experts and civil society leaders warn that the situation, if goes unchecked, may destabilise the social fabric of Coastal Karnataka, and Shetty's murder may not be the last. P4

> If people expect the police alone to ensure peace, it may not be possible. But if religious, political and community leaders take a stand, peace can prevail
>
> Ajai Kumar Singh, former DGP

Reddy, 3 others get 7-yr jail in OMC illegal mining case

TG NAIDU @ Hyderabad

A CBI special court in Hyderabad convicted and sentenced Karnataka BJP leader and former minister Gali Janardhan Reddy and three others to seven years' imprisonment in the illegal mining case involving his Obulapuram Mining Company (OMC), almost 16 years after the case was registered.

The court acquitted Sabitha Indra Reddy, who was Mines and Geology Minister at that time in the Andhra Pradesh (undivided) government, and former IAS officer B Kripanandam in the case.

Soon after the court pronounced its verdict, the CBI took Reddy, his brother-in-law BV Srinivas Reddy, the managing director of the OMC and prime accused in the case, VD Rajagopal, the then director of the Mines Department, and Mehfuz Ali Khan, former minister's PA , into custody. The court ordered each of them to pay a fine of Rs 10,000. It ordered OMC to pay a fine of Rs 1 lakh.

Reddy was arrested on September 5, 2011, and released on bail by the Supreme Court on January 20, 2015. He spent three-and-a-half years in prison. P4

EXPRESS READ

21 of 33 SC judges declare their assets

New Delhi: Twenty-one out of 33 Supreme Court judges, including the CJI, on Monday released details of their full assets -- including their's and spouse's -- on the public domain, a move that will enhance transparency in the judiciary. The sanctioned strength of judges in the apex court is 34 and one post is lying vacant. The top court judges declared their full assets on Monday night, through the Supreme Court's website, www.supremecourtofindia.gov.in. Twelve judges have not declared their detailed assets so far | P10

Jail warder held for abusing CM in video

Mysuru: A warder of Mysore Central Jail was suspended for six months and arrested by the police after a video surfaced on social media showing him making abusive remarks against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. The video was allegedly made as a reaction to a recent incident where the CM publicly rebuked an assistant SP in Belagavi | P4

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